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Office of University Communications

June 10, 2014

University Announces Acquisition of Crawley Hospital Property

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – The Gardner-Webb University Board of Trustees is pleased to announce the purchase of a 53,500-square-foot building that will house the new College of Health Sciences. Officials from Cleveland County Healthcare System (CCHS) have confirmed the sale of Crawley Memorial Hospital, located at 315 W. College Ave., to Gardner-Webb University, effective later this month. The property is owned by Carolinas Healthcare System based in Charlotte, N.C.

Gardner-Webb is currently utilizing leased space within the Crawley building for the Physician Assistant (PA) program, which began in January. The acquisition includes the building, along with nearly 26 acres of property. Officials say the facility will offer many additional opportunities for university growth and will likely house other programs that are operating in other locations on the GWU campus.

“The Crawley building is an ideal addition to the Gardner-Webb main campus,” said GWU Provost and Executive Vice President Dr. Ben Leslie. “It is not only adjacent to our campus, but it provides precisely the kind of space we need to carry out high-quality programs in nursing, physician assistant studies, and preventive and rehabilitative health sciences. Having a single building dedicated to the health sciences positions the University for growth in a critical area. The demand for healthcare professionals in our region is already quite high, and it is only projected to increase. We are proud to have the opportunity to help meet that demand with well-trained professionals who bring together Gardner-Webb’s unique blend of academic excellence and Christian commitment.”

As the concern over healthcare options for citizens continues to rise, university officials have worked to meet the needs of an under-served rural population and increase the number of primary care providers or practitioners entering and providing services in the rural marketplace. Laying the groundwork for academic infrastructure—and the corresponding classroom and lab facilities—to address these concerns is the next logical step, which leaders say builds on an already exceptional series of health-focused degree programs at GWU. Officials firmly believe a College of Health Sciences advances the mission of the

University. Efforts will be made to intentionally recruit students with a passion for primary care and then place those students in rural, inner city, and underdeveloped country clinical rotations to address the incredible need for better access to healthcare.

Health-focused degree programs at Gardner-Webb will be included within the College of Health Sciences. The stellar reputation of the GWU School of Nursing and the excitement surrounding the launch of the Physician Assistant Studies (PA) program, Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) programs, and the School of Preventive and Rehabilitative Health Sciences programs are elements that necessitated the purchase of a facility in which students could benefit from an experiential learning environment. Additionally, the door remains open for other potential health science preparation opportunities including speech, physical and occupational therapy programs.

Crawley Hospital's foundational roots began at Gardner-Webb. Established on the Gardner-Webb campus in August of 1949, Royster Hospital (currently Royster Residence Hall) was named for Dr. R.R. Royster, a 20-year trustee of Shelby Hospital. According to the book "Dreaming, Daring, Doing: The Story of Gardner-Webb University," the college had once operated Royster Hospital, but later the facility was managed by an independent board of directors. In 1958, a new wing was added, giving the hospital space for 30 beds. Then, in the mid-1970s, the new Crawley Hospital—named for John Crawley of Shelby—was built on West College Avenue, and the Royster Hospital building was converted to a men's residence hall.

Initially serving both the University and the community at large as an acute-care, 60-bed hospital, Crawley later transitioned to skilled-care beds and entered into a management services agreement with Cleveland Regional Medical Center in 1996. The hospital's skilled-care operations were moved to Kings Mountain, N.C. and Gardner-Webb has leased the building for office and classroom space.

Renovations are currently being planned, and officials will share additional information as details become finalized.

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University blends a liberal arts core curriculum with more than 55 major and minor professional programs of study, a comprehensive academic experience that flows from our Christian commitment to intellectual freedom, service and leadership.